

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 088270

COMMANDER COSTELLO

FOLLOWING REPEAT BRIDGETOWN 924 SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO
SECDEF DEPT OF COMMERCE LONDON PORT OF SPAIN GEORGETOWN
OTTAWA CINCLANT APR 04.
QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L BRIDGETOWN 0924

CINCLANT FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, PCAT, PEPR, BB, US

SUBJ: BARBADOS SEEKS US ASSISTANCE IN EQUIPPING "DEFENCE FORCE"

REFS: A) BRIDGETOWN A-47 OF 9/16/77 B) 77 BRIDGETOWN 2531
C) BRIDGETOWN A-13 OF 3/10/78 D) 77 STATE 252478

SUMMARY: BARBADOS FORMALLY REQUESTS USG ASSISTANCE IN EQUIPPING ITS PROPOSED "DEFENCE FORCE". FORCE IS TO RESULT FROM EXPANSION AND COMBINATION OF GOB VOLUNTEER REGIMENT AND SMALL COAST GUARD. PERMSEC FOR DEFENCE AND SECURITY AND BARBADOS REGIMENT OFFICERS MARCH 29 GAVE EMBASSY A DETAILED CONFIDENTIAL

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LIST OF NEEDED EQUIPMENT. COMPLETE LIST BEING FORWARDED BY AIRGRAM. GOB IS PRIMARILY INTERESTED IN PURCHASING MILITARY SURPLUS EQUIPMENT OR EXCESS PROPERTY, INCLUDING RIFLES, MILITARY TRUCKS, BARRACK FURNISHINGS AND FIELD EQUIPMENT, COMMUNICATIONS GEAR, ANTI-RIOT EQUIPMENT, UNIFORMS AND FIELD HOSPITAL SUPPLIES. WE AGREED TO BEGIN INVESTIGATING THE POSSIBILITIES OF SUCH PURCHASES AND TO REPORT IMMEDIATELY THE APPROACH ON ACQUISITION OF RIFLES AND AMMUNITION. THE GOB ALSO APPROACHED THE UK AND CANADA WITH A SIMILAR LIST OF NEEDS. END SUMMARY.

1. GOB PERMSEC FOR DEFENSE AND SECURITY GILBERT MILLAR ASKED DCM MARCH 23 FOR MEETING WITH EMBASSY AND NAVAL FACILITY PERSONNEL TO DISCUSS THE PROPOSED BARBADOS DEFENSE FORCE. INCLUDED ON THE GOB SIDE AT THE MEETING ON MARCH 29 IN MILLAR'S OFFICE WERE MILLAR, BARBADOS REGIMENT COLONEL LEONARD BANFIELD, AND REGIMENT MAJOR RUDDY LEWIS. DCM WAS ACCOMPANIED BY POLOFF AND NAVAL FACILITY COMMANDING AND SUPPLY OFFICERS.

2. AS NOTED IN REFS A, B, AND C, PROPOSED DEFENSE FORCE INVOLVES CONVERSION AND EXPANSION OF THE VOLUNTEER BARBADOS REGIMENT AND SMALL COAST GUARD INTO A REGULAR FORCE OF SOME 280 MEN SUPPLEMENTED BY ABOUT 500 VOLUNTEERS. THE PURPOSES OF THE FORCE WOULD INCLUDE AIR-SEA RESCUE, SURVEILLANCE OF COASTAL WATERS, MAINTENANCE OF INTERNAL ORDER, MAINTENANCE OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES AND ASSISTANCE IN THE CASE OF NATURAL DISASTER AS WELL AS MEETING POSSIBLE SECURITY THREATS.

3. MILLAR SAID THE MEETING WAS A PRELIMINARY ONE TO EXPLORE WHETHER THE USG MIGHT ASSIST IN EQUIPPING THE CONFIDENTIAL

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FORCE AS INEXPENSIVELY AS POSSIBLE. MILLAR GAVE U.S. TEAM A LIST OF REQUIREMENTS FOR THE FORCE AND EXPRESSED A SPECIFIC INTEREST IN U.S. MILITARY SURPLUS OR EXCESS PROPERTY THAT MIGHT BE AVAILABLE. COMPLETE LIST BEING FORWARDED BY AIRGRAM.

4. COLONEL BANFIELD INDICATED RIFLES, MILITARY TRUCKS AND JEEPS, BARRACK FURNISHINGS, FIELD EQUIPMENT, COMMUNICATIONS GEAR, ANTI-RIOT EQUIPMENT, UNIFORMS, BOOTS AND FIELD HOSPITAL SUPPLIES WERE THE GOB PRIORITIES NOW. MILLAR ADDED THE GOB WOULD ALSO BE INTERESTED IN ANY REAL BARGAINS NOT ON THE PRIORITY LIST. MAJOR LEWIS SAID CERTAIN ITEMS, INCLUDING TRANSPORT AND UNIFORM ITEMS WOULD ALSO AID IN THE FORMATION OF ADDITIONAL SECONDARY SCHOOL CADET UNITS.

5. MILLAR SAID THE GOB ALSO APPROACHED THE UK AND CANADA WITH THE REQUIREMENTS LIST. UK PROMISED SOME SPOTS FOR BARBADIANS IN TRAINING COURSES WHILE CANADA APPARENTLY IS EXPLORING POSSIBILITY OF SELLING THE GOB THE RIFLES, ALTHOUGH NOTHING AGREED UPON FORMALLY.

6. MILLAR SAID GOB STILL INTERESTED IN COOPERATION WITH ST. LUCIA AND ST. VINCENT IN THE OPERATION OF A COAST GUARD AND DISCUSSIONS ABOUT HOME PORTS, MIXED ISLAND CREWS, ETC. ARE CONTINUING. GOB TEAM NOTED

THE IMPORTANCE OF AN IMPROVED AIR-SEA RESCUE CAPACITY, AND CURRENT DIFFICULTIES IN MONITORING SMUGGLING AND OTHER ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES AT SEA. MILLAR SAID THE UK GAVE VERBAL SUPPORT TO SUCH COOPERATION BUT WOULD CONTRIBUTE ONLY TRAINING.

7. MAJOR LEWIS AND MILLAR NOTED SPECIFIC INTEREST IN GOB PURCHASE OF A BEECHCRAFT BARON OR CESSNA 310 TYPE AIRCRAFT FOR AIR-SEA SURVEILLANCE AND RESCUE. LEWIS
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MENTIONED THREE-WEEK SEARCH AND RESCUE COURSE AND 17-WEEK ENLISTED-TO-OFFICER CONVERSION COURSE OF U.S. COAST GUARD AS MOST VALUABLE FOR PROPOSED FORCE IN IMMEDIATE FUTURE. LEWIS REQUESTS BASIC CANDIDATE QUALIFICATIONS AND OTHER INFORMATION ON OFFICER COURSE SO THAT GOB MIGHT BEGIN IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL CANDIDATES.

8. WE INFORMED GOB THAT WE WOULD TRANSMIT GOB INTEREST IN MILITARY SURPLUS AND EXCESS PROPERTY. WE ADVISED THEM OF APPLICABLE US LAWS AND REGULATIONS GOVERNING TRANSFERS OF ARMS AND AGREED TO SUBMIT THEIR WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION REQUEST FOR STUDY.

9. COMMENT: INQUIRY WAS SOLELY AT INITIATIVE OF GOB. AMBASSADOR HAS CONFIRMED WITH EXTAFF MIN THAT MILLAR'S APPROACH HAS FULL GOB SANCTION. QUANTITIES OF WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION INVOLVED IN REQUEST ARE LIMITED FOR A DEFENSE FORCE OF ABOUT 800. THE GOB JUSTIFIES THE NEED FOR A REGULAR AND UPGRADED FORCE IN TERMS OF LEGITIMATE NEEDS OF AN INDEPENDENT STATE. BARBADOS HAS NO HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEMS. THE ACQUISITION OF WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION AS NOTED ON THE GOB LIST WOULD BE OF MINIMAL ECONOMIC IMPACT ON BARBADOS, BOTH IN TERMS OF OVERALL FORCE COSTS AND IN TERMS OF OVERALL BUDGET EXPENDITURES. THE COAST GUARD COMPONENT OF THE PROPOSED FORCE, AT LEAST, INVOLVES A REGIONAL APPROACH TO CERTAIN PROBLEMS. DESPITE THE LOW DOLLAR COST, GOB CANNOT AFFORD TO OUTFIT THE PROPOSED FORCE WITHOUT THE CONCESSIONARY TERMS ASSOCIATED WITH MILITARY SURPLUS OR EXCESS PROPERTY PROGRAMS. A POSITIVE USG RESPONSE TO THE GOB REQUEST WITHOUT CONSULTATIONS WITH THE UK AND CANADA COULD LEAD TO OUR SUPPLANTING THEM IN AN AREA WHERE THEY HAVE TRADITIONAL INTERESTS. A POSITIVE USG RESPONSE
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WOULD, HOWEVER, IMPROVE THE ATMOSPHERE SURROUNDING THE RENEWAL NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE NAVAL FACILITY HERE, EVEN IF THE RESPONSE WERE CONFINED TO NON-COMBAT ITEMS. WE SHOULD HOWEVER NOTE THERE IS SOME POSSIBILITY THIS

REQUEST IS LINKED TO A ROLE THE GOB ENVISIONS FOR IT-
SELF IN A BELIZE DEFENSE CONTINGENT.

10. THE BARBADIAN REQUEST EMPHASIZES THE INCREASED
SENSITIVITY TO SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS WE HAVE NOTED
IN THE EASTERN CARIBBEAN. ALMOST ALL THESE STATES
ARE ALL BUT DEFENSELESS AND WITH THE BRITISH MILI-
TARY PRESENCE WANING THEY ARE INCREASINGLY AWARE OF
THIS FACT. THE RISE OF CUBAN MILITARY CAPABILITIES
IS THEREFORE A MATTER FOR SOME CONCERN ALTHOUGH MOST
GOVERNMENTS IN THE AREA SEEM TO ASSUME THEY ARE
HUDDLED UNDER THE U.S. SECURITY UMBRELLA.

11. ACTION REQUESTED: WE REQUEST THAT THE DEPART-
MENT STUDY THE POUCHED LIST AND SEPARATE OUT THOSE
ITEMS MOST EASILY PROVIDED BY
ESTABLISHED MILITARY SURPLUS OR OTHER SUCH PROGRAMS
FROM THOSE MORE EASILY PROCURED THROUGH STRICTLY
COMMERCIAL CHANNELS. SINCE QUESTIONS ASSOCIATED
WITH WEAPONS AND AMMUNITIONS SEEM DIFFERENT FROM
EITHER OF THE ABOVE, WE WOULD PREFER SEPARATE CON-
SIDERATION OF COMBAT ITEMS. WE ALSO REQUEST INSTRUC-
TIONS TO CONSULT WITH UK AND CANADIAN REPS
HERE AND, PERHAPS, LATER IN LONDON AND OTTAWA TO
COORDINATE RESPONSES. WE WOULD APPRECIATE AN IN-
TERIM REPLY, INCLUDING INFO REQUESTED IN PARA SEVEN,
TO ALLOW US AT LEAST AN INTERIM RESPONSE TO THE
GOB INQUIRY BY ABOUT APRIL 20.
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